United Nations E/C.19/2013/L.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
23 May 2013

Original: English

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Twelfth session
New York, 20-31 May 2013
Agenda item 3
Follow-up on the recommendations of the Permanent Forum: (a) health; (b) education; (c) culture

Recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Recommendations on health

1. The Permanent Forum has identified the proposals, objectives, recommendations and areas of possible future action set out below and, through the Economic and Social Council, recommends that States, entities of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples, the private sector and non-governmental organizations assist in their realization.

2. It is the understanding of the Secretariat that the proposals, objectives, recommendations and areas of possible future action to be carried out by the United Nations, as set out below, will be implemented to the extent that resources from the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources are available.

3. The right to health materializes through the well-being of an individual as well as the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being of the whole community. Colonization, including policies of oppression, dispossession and assimilation, have led to the health challenges faced by many indigenous peoples today, which will also affect future generations. As a consequence, the health of indigenous peoples is weakened by a range of underlying social and economic determinants, including poverty, inadequate housing, lack of education, food insecurity, lower employment, loss of traditional lands and languages, barriers to political participation and institutionalized racism. The health gap between indigenous peoples and others is clear evidence of the discriminatory structures that are in conflict with human rights and indigenous peoples' rights in particular. They demonstrate the need for Governments and United Nations entities to refocus their efforts in fulfilling their obligations towards indigenous peoples.

4. The Permanent Forum recalls the many recommendations that call for the statistics on indigenous health. Data collection and disaggregation remain a challenge. In particular, the delivery of health care in rural and remote areas remains a major obstacle to the right to health. In addition, there remains an urgent need for more

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indigenous health professionals, mental health services, programmes addressing non-communicable diseases and reproductive health. In particular, the Forum reaffirms the recommendation of the eighth session for an expert group meeting on sexual and reproductive health.

5. Good practices are emerging that complement public health services with traditional health practices. These practices emphasize intercultural dialogue and discussion to ensure that the delivery of health care is carried out in a culturally specific way consistent with articles 23 and 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These practices should be supported and promoted.

6. In sexual and reproductive rights there is a need for HIV- and gender- and age-sensitive sexual health education that respects cultural sensitivities in pre- and post-testing conditions and delivery of services:

(a) In the design and implementation of the strategic plan, 2014-2018, of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to take into consideration the rights of indigenous women and young people;

(b) To contribute to the ministries of health and indigenous women's organizations to consolidate their work on intercultural standards for quality sexual and reproductive health and maternal health in the Latin American region and to assess experiences on intercultural health models in other regions of the world in order to identify opportunities for South-South cooperation;

(c) To ensure the integration of indigenous peoples' rights in national and subnational strategies on gender-based violence and to promote the delivery of culturally acceptable critical services to address gender-based violence and sexual violence, with a focus on adolescents, youth and migrant indigenous women;

(d) With the United Nations country teams, to contribute to strengthen the integration of the rights of indigenous women and youth in national and subnational development strategies and sectoral plans, particularly but not exclusively in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, maternal mortality and morbidity as well as in adolescent and youth policies and plans;

(e) To contribute supporting work at the country level on the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting among indigenous girls, including the elimination of other forms of harmful practices, for example early and forced marriage and early unwanted pregnancies;

(f) To promote indigenous young peoples' rights, at the regional and country levels, including their participation in the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 processes, and, where possible, their participation in UNFPA-led discussions on the 2015 development agenda.

7. The Permanent Forum reiterates its previous recommendations that address the alarming numbers of suicides among indigenous youth. The Forum encourages community organization for safe spaces and low-threshold health services, respecting non-discrimination, in particular where discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation is concerned. The United Nations system, in particular the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), should emphasize the provision of mental health services, with particular efforts to address suicide among indigenous youth.

8. In order to draw more heightened attention to diabetes and other non-communicable diseases, the Permanent Forum recommends that WHO/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Governments develop action plans to improve access by indigenous peoples living with diabetes to health prevention and care of diabetes and non-communicable diseases. The Forum urges States to establish or reinforce community-based health programmes that empower and educate indigenous women and children to prevent and overcome diabetes and non-communicable diseases.

9. The Permanent Forum requests WHO/PAHO to undertake a global study jointly with relevant indigenous peoples' institutions and indigenous health experts on the situation of indigenous peoples living with diabetes and non-communicable diseases so as to establish the international evidence base needed. The results of the study can be presented at the fourteenth session of the Forum and in appropriate processes within WHO/PAHO. Special attention should be placed on indigenous persons with diabetes in developing countries, as there are hardly any studies from such countries. Furthermore, the Forum calls upon the World Diabetes Foundation and the International Diabetes Federation to provide financial and technical assistance to WHO/PAHO and identified indigenous institutions that will conduct the study.

10. The Permanent Forum calls for heightened attention to diabetes and other non-communicable diseases by WHO/PAHO and States, including the United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in 2014, and calls upon these parties to discuss issues related to indigenous health and formulate an action plan with particular focus on improving the prevention and access to the care of diabetes and non-communicable diseases.

11. The Permanent Forum requests WHO, in cooperation with indigenous health providers, to conduct a study on the prevalence and causes of suicide among indigenous youth, and on efforts being undertaken, including culture-based approaches, to prevent suicide and promote mental health and wellness, and requests the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, WHO and UNICEF to organize an expert group meeting to review policies and best practices with regard to engaging indigenous youth on the prevention of suicide among them.

Recommendations on education

12. Indigenous peoples who maintain cultural practices and lifestyles based on their traditional knowledge, their vision of the world and their spirituality, are confronted by educational systems that have little regard for indigenous cultures, indigenous languages and indigenous knowledge. Education is a driver for development. It is well established that improved educational outcomes have a positive impact upon indigenous participation across the range of socioeconomic indicators. Yet the evidence suggests that the poorest areas receive the poorest education, which is especially the case for indigenous peoples. An urgent challenge facing indigenous peoples and indigenous children today is the lack of access to quality education entailing relevant skills for indigenous peoples and their communities.

13. The Permanent Forum affirms that articles 11 to 15 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provide a critical framework for ensuring necessary transformative changes in indigenous education as well as ensuring the exercise of the right to self-determination. Indigenous peoples have the

right to be involved in defining and developing educational priorities and initiatives, including laws, regulations and policies, which have a direct impact upon them. Such educational systems should respect, recognize and include indigenous peoples' world views, cultures, languages and traditional knowledge, while ensuring gender equality and the recognition of traditional knowledge-keepers as the pedagogical authorities.

14. The Permanent Forum encourages States and United Nations agencies and funds to implement, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, proactive and substantive measures to realize the full and effective implementation of the rights laid down in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These measures would include increased and greater accessibility for indigenous learners who live in remote areas or in nomadic communities. The Forum calls upon States to respect and implement article 19 of the Declaration by ensuring the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures which affect them.

15. Education in the mother tongue and bilingual education, foremost in primary and secondary schools, lead to effective and long-term successful educational outcomes. The Permanent Forum urges States to fund and implement the Programme of Action of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, specifically in the following education-related objective. The Forum underlines the need for States to respect and promote indigenous peoples' definitions of learning and education, founded on the values and priorities of the relevant indigenous peoples. The right to education is independent of State borders and should be expressed by indigenous peoples' right to freely traverse borders, as supported by articles 9 and 36 of the Declaration.

16. The Permanent Forum recommends, based on articles 14 and 15 of the Declaration, that States support indigenous peoples in establishing their own educational systems and institutions, including universities. Specific measures should be established to support indigenous, intercultural and community higher educational institutions and programmes in their academic, organizational, financial and accreditation processes. An excellent example of best practices in this regard is when compulsory indigenous studies are included in the curricula of higher educational institutions. The Forum urges States to recognize the importance of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, launched during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development of 2012, and to incorporate the knowledge, history and proposals of indigenous peoples in the activities to be undertaken.

17. The Permanent Forum recalls the recommendations contained in paragraphs 48 and 56 of the report of the international expert group meeting on indigenous youth (E/C.19/2013/3), emphasizing that linguistic education and linguistic sovereignty are of fundamental importance to indigenous peoples. The Forum recommends that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and other competent bodies of the United Nations convene, together with the Forum, a meeting of experts on intercultural matters and bilingual education.

18. Indigenous persons with disabilities face exceptionally difficult barriers both because they are indigenous and because they are disabled. The Permanent Forum recommends that States develop and provide full access to educational opportunities on an equitable basis and without discrimination for indigenous persons, as recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In particular, the Forum recommends that sign language education curricula be developed, in

consultation with deaf indigenous persons, which reflect their cultures, issues, needs and preferences. Where there is State or international cooperation on education, indigenous persons with disabilities should be included. The Forum recommends that countries which have not already ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities do so urgently.

19. The Permanent Forum recommends that States, in collaboration with indigenous peoples and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and UNESCO, prepare a comprehensive report on the number of indigenous languages spoken in each State. It is important to identify the current numbers and ages of fluent speakers of each indigenous language, and that measures, including constitutional, legislative, regulatory and policy measures as well as financial support, whether ongoing or project-based, undertaken by States, United Nations agencies and indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous languages continue to be used, survive and thrive so that indigenous languages do not become extinct.

Recommendations on culture

20. The Permanent Forum recognizes culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. It has always been recognized by indigenous peoples that the three pillars of the concept of sustainable development (economic viability, social inclusion and environmental balance) were not enough to reflect the complexity of indigenous peoples' societies. Indigenous peoples see the cultural pillar as encompassing the cultural and spiritual traditions of humanity.

21. During the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the members of the Permanent Forum were not able to register as United Nations experts. Forum members attend many United Nations meetings where their specific status is not recognized. Therefore, the Forum recommends that United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Environment Programme and UNESCO amend their registration processes to include Forum members as United Nations experts, not as part of major groups.

22. Recalling paragraph 120 of its report on the eleventh session (E/2012/43), the Permanent Forum notes the cooperative work carried out by the World Heritage Committee with Forum members and indigenous peoples in the nomination and review of world heritage sites. At the same time, the Forum is aware that the security protocols for cultural heritage sites often result in indigenous peoples being excluded from or denied access to those indigenous heritage sites (temples, cultural heritage quarries, rock shelters, carved trees, engravings, paintings, travel routes and grinding grooves), which are classified as the common heritage of humankind. The Forum recommends that UNESCO revise such procedures and protocols, taking into account indigenous peoples' rights and full participation in world heritage sites.

23. Sustainable development means pursuing economic activities that meet the needs of indigenous peoples without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Indigenous tourism is often seen as a major growth and development driver in terms of supporting indigenous peoples' economies and businesses. At the same time, indigenous peoples themselves are viewed as tourist icons. Therefore, the Permanent Forum recommends that discussions with relevant United Nations agencies be considered in order for indigenous peoples to determine their own representations and tourism opportunities.